

February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## Testimony to the Michigan State Senate Education

Ana Rivera

My name is Ana Rivera; I am a parent of two boys, Damian 14 and Omar 9 and a resident of Southwest Detroit. I am a graduate of Detroit Public Schools.

My 14 year old son attended a charter for 8 years, straight A's – Honor roll! AWESOME, Right? Well with all this chaos and insecurities of a good performing high school, I placed him in a private school and to my letdown and my son's let down, he has dropped from all A's to B's, C's and D's- WHY? BECAUSE HE CAME FROM AN UNDER PERFORMING CHARTER! WHAT I CALL THOSE A'S ARE FALSE A'S! Charters are subject to the SAME RULES as the public but till this day they don't prove to be better academically and no parent voice and no one to held accountable. My schools was authorized by Ferris State. How can a school so far away understand our community and hold our management company accountable?

Slide 25: Which leads me to describe the state of the schools in my community with two words **ERRATIC AND UNPREDICTABLE!** This is the same slide the mayor referenced about Southwest Detroit last week.

Parents or the community did not have a say in the opening or closing of these 12 schools. In 2012 community tried to change that by working with Lighthouse Management Company to create an arts infused school.

This is school my younger son attends. You would think I learned my lesson but it was a hard decision to pick between crumbling DPS buildings or underperforming charters. My hopes were up for this school!

But very similar to the 5 Em's we've had in less than 5 yrs, Lighthouse has a similar track record! We have had 3 principals in three years (the school has been open for three years) and teacher turnover is high. Teachers leaving the schools hurts the morale enough that student achievement declines. As concerned parents who can we hold accountable if the mgmt. company is located in Florida and our authorizer, GVSU, is 3 hours away!

I am not convinced we simply need more "choices" in public education. We do need great public schools in every community. We should be happy to send our children to a school that meet the needs of local families. We don't really have any choice at all if our local public school is not a high quality option. Choice alone does not guarantee quality and it has not solved the larger problems facing public education because they are loosely regulated, charter schools are often neither accountable nor transparent.

Please do what is necessary for my children! Otherwise, I will lose all hope and be one more person taking my kids out of the city!

Today, I am asking you to support the following:

- 1) Pay DPS debt
- 2) Return DPS to it's elected Board
- 3) To introduce and support a bill that creates a local body in Detroit, accountable to Detroiters, that has oversight over opening and closing schools, DPS and Charter, with community voice.

Without a bill like this half of Detroit's schools, the charters, will not have any local oversight. This is wrong. My kids and Detroit's kids deserve you to listen to us. We are crying out like the parents of flint. Don't ignore us.